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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4471
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAHQA/HQ USAF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEADWD/DA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/CNO WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY 3107
RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 9775
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 3265
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 3881
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 3128
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 1223
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 3856
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0714
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1184
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 7756
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 5217
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 0134
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 4270
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 6209
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 8550
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 003454

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XOXO
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Iran

Key stories in the media:

Last night Channel 2-TV, followed by all media, reported that President Bush is expected to make a two-day visit to Israel in January. Maariv reported that the White House and PM Ehud Olmert's office have confirmed the visit, but that they added that no exact

date for the visit has been set. Various media cited possible dates ranging from the beginning through the middle of the month. Ha'aretz and Yediot said that the visit will focus on advancing Israeli-Palestinian talks.

All media highlighted President Bush's comment, following the publication of the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iranian Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities, that pressure can change Iran's mind, but that Iran remains dangerous. Media quoted Israeli officials as saying that their assessment of Iran's nuclear program differed greatly from the U.S. report. Yediot reported that Israel has shown the U.S. intelligence that contradicts the NIE. Yediot reported on a severe disagreement between the top Israeli officials who received the report and President Bush and Vice President Cheney. However, Yediot cited denial of the incident by sources in the Prime Minister's Office. Major media quoted PM Ehud Olmert as saying that sanctions against Iran must be tightened. Ha'aretz quoted PM Ehud Barak as saying that words do not stop missiles. Maariv reported that Israel's main concern is the international public atmosphere that the report will produce and the greater level of difficulty that the continuation of the sanctions regime against Iran will encounter. Leading media reported that FM Tzipi Livni has initiated a worldwide diplomatic campaign aimed at tightening sanctions against Iran. The Jerusalem Post quoted Strategic Affairs Minister Avigdor Lieberman as saying on Tuesday that the U.S. report is irrelevant and will not affect decisions about how to handle Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons. Maariv cited Israel's concern that Iran has received assistance from North Korea. Yediot reported that in a letter to his troops, IAF commander Eliezer Shkedy compared Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's utterances to Hitler's.

Maariv cited a classified Israeli Foreign Ministry document stating that President Bush is politically weak and unable to carry out a military operation against Iran.

Leading media reported that this morning two or three Palestinians were killed and two others were wounded in an IAF strike in the Gaza Strip. The Jerusalem Post reported that on Tuesday the IDF denied that a house on a western Negev kibbutz was hit accidentally during an IAF helicopter attack on a Gaza training base overnight on Monday.

The Jerusalem Post and Ha'aretz cited a Peace Now report released on Tuesday, according to which only 3% of illegally constructed buildings in West Bank settlements and unauthorized outposts have been dismantled by the authorities.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the Knesset has begun to discuss extending temporary legislation granting the Shin Bet extensive powers to investigate security suspects at the same time that the High Court of Justice is holding hearings on whether this same legislation contravenes human rights and should be cancelled.

Maariv reported on a thaw in relations between Olmert and Barak after the Annapolis conference. The newspaper reported that the two have apparently realized that maintaining the government coalition is now crucial for both of them.

Ha'aretz reported that the registrar of non-profit organizations has given the Elad organization, which purchases property in Arab East Jerusalem for Jewish settlers, 21 days to reveal the identity of its donors.

Yediot reported that an Israeli radio station -- Al-Masharkiyeh -- broadcasts to south Lebanese audiences.

The Jerusalem Post and other media reported that visiting American financier Michael Milken warned on Tuesday that Israel's \$7 trillion human capital market is in danger of rapidly depreciating should the government not take the appropriate corrective steps to repair and invest in the local education system.

The Jerusalem Post quoted visiting Cypriot FM Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis as saying this week that Israelis investing in or purchasing property in the Turkish-occupied sector of Cyprus may be engaging in an illegal transaction.

The Jerusalem Post printed a Jewish Telegraphic Agency newswire report that Venezuela's Jews are relieved by President Hugo Chavez's defeat in the country's constitutional referendum.

Iran:

Summary:

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Those who wish to avoid a nuclear Iran better heed those within the Islamic Republic who are seeking to engage in dialogue."

Washington correspondent Orly Azolai wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "A dialogue between the United States and Iran will be good for America, perhaps for Israel too."

Columnist Calev Ben-David wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "From a Jerusalem viewpoint, the message [the NIE report] sends from Washington seems to be: If you're thinking of a military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities, Israel -- you're on your own."

Block Quotes:

II. "No Military Strike? Then Start Talking"

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (12/5): "The American intelligence report that makes the option of a military strike against Iran -- and possibly the next dose of sanctions -- less likely to materialize gives us an important time-out to try a new avenue vis-a-vis the Islamic Republic. That route would center on diplomacy aimed at neutralizing Tehran's motivation to further pursue the development of nuclear arms. For some time now, Iran has held an internal debate -- which sometimes reaches the Iranian media -- on how far Tehran can go in defying international pressure to abandon its nuclear program.... The American interest in talks with Iran stems from the fact that it was not only Tehran that was pleased by the intelligence report. Russia, too, was no less satisfied.... For the Americans, the trick now will be to find the right leverage to open up a channel of negotiations -- which could deprive Russia of its virtual monopoly on ties and influence on Iran. Those who wish to avoid a nuclear Iran better heed those within the Islamic Republic who are seeking to engage in dialogue -- especially in light of the assumption that Iran will continue its efforts to obtain nuclear weapons."

II. "In America, There Are Already Calls for Talks with Tehran"

Washington correspondent Orly Azolai wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (12/5): "Bush may not have modified his policy, but the reality around him has changed a lot since [the publication of the NIE] report. At this juncture there is absolutely no chance of Congress allowing him to go to war with Iran. His ability to lead a move of sanctions is also fading away: China and Russia will not agree; neither will Europe.... A dialogue between the United States and Iran will be good for America, perhaps for Israel too. Handshakes between Washington and Tehran are better than American cruise missiles in the skies of Bushehr. This being said, it is important to remember that over the past few years the forecasts of U.S. intelligence have not been brilliant.... It has become clear that the U.S. intelligence agencies did not really know what was going on in Tehran: the report that was made public this week is the opposite of the one that was presented two years ago."

III. "Reading Between the Lines of the New Iran Report"

Columnist Calev Ben-David wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (12/5): "The White House may have tried to keep [the NIE] report from going public, as some pundits have suggested. However, having claimed proudly to have forged at Annapolis a coalition of Arab states in opposition to Iran and its radical Islamist proxies, Bush and Rice might well be thinking that it might be handy at this stage to have a reason to implicitly back down from the military option that those 'moderate' Muslim allies so ardently oppose. That's certainly what the NIE report conveniently provides, even if that will not be publicly acknowledged by the administration. What does the NIE analysis really tell us about Iranian nuclear intentions and capabilities? That's anybody's guess. But from a Jerusalem viewpoint, the message it sends from Washington seems to be: If you're thinking of a military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities, Israel -- you're on your own."

JONES